

A Regional Public Transport Authority for Geelong

What's the current situation?

- Currently, managers based in regional offices of the Department of Infrastructure manage the radial administrative regions from Melbourne (from major regional centres to state borders). These are very large regions with little sense of a common identity.
- There is little system-wide planning done by these managers, who mainly administer contracts and funding. There are occasional interventions from the head office of the Department of Infrastructure, but most planning is left to individual bus companies which don't work in unison.
- There are no public reporting mechanisms about the performance of the region's transport systems (in terms of service provision, patronage or environmental goals), and therefore little local awareness or ownership of any policy goals.
- "Viclink" (which is an extension of Metlink) is now responsible for providing information for public transport operating outside metropolitan Melbourne. Viclink also provides an information line for V/Line customers. Regional authorities could continue to work with Viclink.

Why have a regional authority?

- Metlink is a "place-based" authority for metropolitan Melbourne, aimed at providing a single contact and information point for services provided by Melbourne's different transport operators. While it does not plan services or consult the wider community, it operates fairly independently (from the Department and the Minister) as an authority with its own media spokespeople and an ability to advocate.
- Major regional centres (eg of 30,000 people or more with their own town bus systems) could also have their own authorities to provide an institutional backup for their distinct public transport systems (which often operate under their own brands, such as Geelong Transit System (GTS) and Bellarine Transit).
- A regional authority could increase the effectiveness of system planning, provide a local voice for public transport, and encourage local involvement in and ownership of transport.

What would the authority have responsibility for?

- Planning town bus services and their links to the V/Line network, including routes, stops and timetabling;
- Seeking public feedback and facilitating ongoing consultation and shared decision-making;
- Reporting periodically (eg through annual reports) on the performance of the system, including progress towards patronage and service targets;

- Providing information to the public and the media on system performance; delays; arrangements for special events etc; and marketing the system;
- Working with Viclink by checking information provided to travellers, distributing system information locally and posting timetables at bus stops.

What form could the authority take in the Geelong region?

- Called “Geelong Region”, “Barwon” or “Geelong and Bellarine” Transport / Transit / Public Transport Authority.
- Covering the current Geelong Transit System (GTS) and Bellarine Transit services.
 - These services could be given a common branded name reflecting the name of the Authority (with the GTS fare zone and Bellarine Transit express services identified through other means).
- Be expanded to include non-V/Line services in all areas covered by G21 region (including Colac Otway and Golden Plains Shires.)

What reforms are required if no regional authority is set up?

- The Department of Infrastructure’s Geelong office will require additional staff dedicated to the Geelong region’s public transport.
- One officer should be publicly appointed as a dedicated “Geelong Region Public Transport Manager” and there should be a clear contact for media that is well informed on local issues.

These dedicated local DoI officers should have responsibilities (based on those envisioned for the authority) to:

- Plan and regularly review bus routes, stops and timetabling;
- Seek public feedback, and facilitate ongoing consultation and shared decision-making;
- Set targets for patronage and service coverage and quality;
- Produce annual reports on the performance of the GTS and Bellarine Transit systems, including progress towards targets;
- Provide information to the public and the media on system performance; delays; arrangements for special events etc. and market the system; and
- Distribute local information (brochures, posters etc) and post timetables at bus stops and work with Viclink to verify information provided to travellers.